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Contact: Robert Sauers Phone: +93 (0) 794 858 501 Email: rsauers@usaid.gov

PRESS RELEASE

Panjsher Tourism Development Conference Promotes Investing in Afghanistan's Future

PANJSHER, AFGHANISTAN | MAY 30, 2011 — On May 28 and 29, more than 20 international business owners participated in the first ever Panjsher Tourism Development Conference, hosted by the Panjsher Provincial Government and the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency. The conference introduced potential investors and tour operators to opportunities in Panjsher's nascent tourism industry. USAID, the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Defense's Task Force for Business and Stability Operations, and the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency Society provided additional funding and logistical support for the conference.

The Panjsher provincial government has identified tourism as an area where Panjsher enjoys comparative economic advantage. The conference marked the beginning of a concerted effort to attract investors and tour operators to Panjsher, one of the most secure provinces in the country.

Speaking at the conference, Deputy Minister of Tourism Nabi Farahi emphasized his wish for Afghanistan to have a thriving tourism industry, saying, "One of the ancient and long lasting traditions of Afghanistan is that guests are honored. But tourism can only happen if we have a good support system."

The conference began with a one-day tour of the Panjsher valley's most notable sites, including the tomb of Ahmad Shah Massoud. The second day featured presentations and discussion on the province's potential for tourism from senior Afghan and US government representatives, private-sector stakeholders, and tourism industry development experts.

"The private-sector will be the engine of growth for long-term sustainability in Afghanistan. With its unique landscape, natural resources, and proximity to Kabul, Panjsher is well positioned to take advantage of the many economic benefits of tourism, both domestic and international," said U.S. Embassy Senior Commercial Officer Robyn Kessler.

Panjsher Province was the last stop of a three-stop tourism investment event. The investors received similar introductions to the tourism and adventure travel potential of Kabul City and Bamyan Province.

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